

For Immediate Release

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(Washington, D.C.) - Today, Congressman Albio Sires (D-NJ), a member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, made the following statement after hearing testimony from General David H. Petraeus and U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker given before a joint hearing between the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and the House Armed Services Committee on the success of the surge in Iraq:

"According to General Petraeus's testimony, the surge has helped to quell some of the sectarian violence in parts of Iraq. However, I continue to be concerned that the surge has not achieved the political reconciliations necessary to allow the Iraqi government to meet critical benchmarks. Both Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus indicated that we will achieve our goal over time but that it will not be quick or easy. Unfortunately, after listening to their testimony, I still do not see a clearly defined goal for success in Iraq.

"General Petraeus spoke of his plan to slowly withdraw American troops starting at the end of the year, contingent on progress in Iraq. I am deeply concerned that he chooses to make the withdrawal of our men and women serving in Iraq dependent on the Iraqi government meeting benchmarks, political reconciliation and putting an end to the sectarian violence. Their progress has been slow and we must bring our troops home and out of harms way.

"The terms and conditions of "success" have continued to change. In the years that we have been involved, the goals have been an ever moving target. And, after hearing their testimony, I still don't believe we have a clear mission in Iraq to determine what our goals are and how to achieve success in Iraq. American lives cannot continue to be sacrificed without a clearly defined goal.

"Our involvement in Iraq needs to be reassessed. The American people are clamoring for an end to the conflict in an effort to save the lives of our soldiers."

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